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Lambda Letters Project

#32577

Vol. 4, No. 3 March, 1996 6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, California 95608 Phone (916) 965-6851

Site, Date of Annual Meeting Announced!

The third annual membership meeting of the Lambda Letters Project will occur on Saturday, April 20, 1996, at the Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, 4641 Marconi Avenue (at Mission) in Sacramento, starting at 9:30 a.m. with coffee and donuts, and the business meeting at 10 a.m. The agenda includes a report on the accomplishments of the Project in 1995, approval of the 1996–97 budget (covering April 1, 1996, through March 31, 1997), the election of new Board members, and other business that may properly come before the meeting. *Please plan to attend this annual meeting. Help us make Lambda Letters a representative democracy!*

If you are unable to attend, *please complete and return the proxy statement* at the front of this newsletter. This is very important, because unless we have a quorum of one-third the members present in person or by proxy, we cannot accomplish the important business of the meeting.

Any member "in good standing" may vote at the meeting; that is, anyone who has returned one or more signed letters during January–March; who provided a minimum of three hours of volunteer

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AIDS/HIV Letter and Article Writer Needed

Joe Heller has done a superb job over the past several years researching our AIDS/HIV subject and composing the monthly articles and sample letters on that subject. However, early this coming summer he will be moving to Arizona for a well-deserved retirement. He is one of our longest-serving volunteers and we will sorely miss him.

As you can imagine, we need to find a replacement for this important volunteer position. We need a volunteer with good writing skills who can spend about ten hours each month researching possible subjects and then composing sample letters and articles for our newsletter. This volunteer should also attend a monthly, two- to three-hour staff meeting in which each month's subjects are chosen and other important business of the Project is accomplished. Staff meetings are held on weekends and rotate between locations in the Sacramento and Oakland areas. The Project can provide leads on how to find suitable subjects and advice on writing if needed. This is a great opportunity for you to influence the subjects we cover. Please consider volunteering for this important position, or help us find the person to do it!

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters Collected

January, 1996	11,883 letters
In all of 1996	11,883 letters

Dollars Spent

January, 1996	$1,845
In all of 1996	$1,845

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

This newsletter printed on recycled paper

The Lambda Letters Newsletter is published monthly except in December by the Lambda Letters Project Inc., 6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, CA 95608. Postmaster: send address changes to the address above.

Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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Publication of the name of any person or organization in articles or advertising in the Lambda Letters Project newsletter is not to be construed as any indication of the sexual orientation of such person or organization.

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Our annual fund-raising auction will be held on Sunday, May 5th. Until we provide you with further details, please consider what you could donate to the auction. This auction provides major funding for the work we do year-round.

Advertising Rates

Business-card sized ads (3½" × 2") $10 per issue
Quarter-page ads $20 per issue
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Send payment and your camera-ready copy, along with your name and phone number, to:
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Deadline is the 25th of each month.

☐ *Yes, I want to make a donation to help LLP continue its important work. (Appreciated but not required.)*

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(*Actual cost to LLP for you to receive 44 letters in one year.)

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Women's Issue

Renewed Hope for Victims of Domestic Violence

Last May we had a letter drive for A.B. 800, introduced by Assemblymember Sheila Kuehl (D–Encino). This important bill for California mothers would have focused on awards of child custody to perpetrators of domestic violence. Under current California law, mothers are required to *prove* that custody issued to a batterer would be detrimental to their children. Sponsored by the California Alliance Against Domestic Violence, A.B. 800 would have reversed this presumption by placing the burden of proof back onto the perpetrators. Among the provisions in this bill was the fact that, when considering bestowing custody of a child to a domestic violence perpetrator, the court would be *required* to consider whether that perpetrator had committed any further acts of domestic violence; and whether he or she had successfully completed a batterer's treatment program.

With strong opposition from the California Judges Association, this bill failed in the Committee on the Judiciary last May by a vote of 5–2. During the second half of 1995, however, Ms. Kuehl's office amended the bill and played an active role in educating the other members in the Assembly on the need for such a law. Their efforts were recently rewarded when A.B. 800 passed in the Committee on the Judiciary on January 29th (11–0) and a few days later on the Assembly floor (74–0)!

Now A.B. 800 is currently sitting in the Senate Committee on the Judiciary and waiting to be heard. Although no hearing date is scheduled yet, we expect it to be out of this committee by the time your letters arrive. So we are directing our support to the Senate floor. Even though passage of A.B. 800 in the Senate looks favorable, we want to continue supporting Assemblymember Kuehl's persistent efforts, since this bill is still needed to further protect the rights of battered women and their children. There are still many underrepresented victims in this state who desperately need our advocacy on this issue.

Please sign this month's letter, urging Senate members to support this long-overdue bill when it comes to the Senate floor. Mothers should never be forced to prove to the court that placing their children in the care of a batterer is detrimental—the courts should already recognize this to be true.

Couples, Families, Individuals

Ellie Zacks, Ph.D.

Clinical Psychologist
PSY10426

(916) 725-4713
By Appointment

6359 Auburn Blvd., Suite E, Citrus Heights, CA 95621

People of Color Issue

Demand Fairness in the Administration of Justice

Please write to President Clinton and urge him to instruct Attorney General Janet Reno to be fair across the board in the prosecution of drug offenders.

Last July our newsletter carried a plea to you to write her to adhere to a color-blind approach to prosecuting federal drug law violations. This was in response to a May, 1995, *Los Angeles Times* article which reported that although large numbers of whites use and sell crack cocaine, federal authorities in Southern California waged their war against crack use almost entirely in minority communities.

Federal agents denied at the time that their focus of resources in minority neighborhoods had anything to do with race: the traffic of drugs was simply more apparent in poor areas. This explanation, weak

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A.B. 1982 in Senate Subcommittee

In last month's newsletter, we notified you that A.B. 1982 had been passed by the Assembly by the minimum number of votes required. It passed with 41 "aye" votes and 31 "no" votes. This bill singles out lesbians and gay men who have been legally married in other states by not recognizing those marriages in California. The vote was mostly along party lines.

Those members of the Assembly who voted in favor of this awful legislation were: Ackerman (R), Aguiar (R), Alby (R), Baldwin (R), Battin (R), Baugh (R), Boland (R), Boronardo (R), Bowler (R), Brulte (R), **Cannella (D)**, Conroy (R), Firestone (R), Frusetta (R), Goldsmith (R), Granlund (R), Harvey (R), Hawkins (R), Hoge (R), House (R), Kaloogian (R), Knight (R), Knowles (R), Kuykendall (R), **Machado (D)**, Margett (R), Miller (R), Morrissey (R), Morrow (R), **Murray (D)**, Olberg (R), Poochigian (R), Rainey (R), Richter (R), Rogan (R), Setencich (R), Takasugi (R), Thompson (R), Weggelland (R), and Pringle (R).

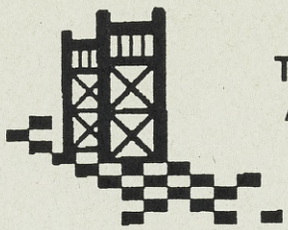
Those voting against the bill were: Alpert (D), Archie-Hudson (D), Bates (D), Bowen (D), Brown (D), Burton (D), Caldera (D), Campbell (D), Davis (D), Ducheny (D), Escutia (D), Figueroa (D), Friedman (D), Gallegos (D), Hannigan (D), Hauser (D), Isenberg (D), Katz (D), Knox (D), Kuehl (D), Lee (D), Martinez (D), Mazzoni (D), McDonald (D), Kevin Murray (D), Napolitano (D), Sher (D), Speier (D), Sweeney (D), Vasconcellos (D) and Villaraigosa (D).

Those not voting were: Baca (D), Brewer (R), Bustamente (D), Cortese (Reform), Cunneen (R), McPherson (R) and Tucker (D).

The bill now goes to the Senate and is scheduled to be heard by the Judiciary Committee sometime in March.

Please write to members of the Judiciary Committee asking that they oppose this legislation. We have enclosed a sample letter which you can sign, or use to compose your own letter. Composing your own letter carries much more weight than a form letter, but if you do not have time to write your own letter, please consider signing the sample letter. Given the number of letters generated by the Lambda Letters Project, even form letters can carry quite an impact.

Unfortunately, South Dakota's governor has signed a similar bill into law in that state. We hope that by killing the bill in California, we may take the momentum away from the burgeoning movement to pass such legislation in states across the nation.



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Shortsighted Savings in Health Care Costs

Assemblymember Goldsmith (R–Poway) has introduced A.B. 9, a potentially disastrous bill which passed the Assembly and is now in the State Senate. Hopefully a Senate committee will kill the bill before it reaches the Senate floor, but as a precaution this month we are asking that you sign the enclosed letter to your state senator (or compose your own).

A.B. 9 would eliminate all medical services for uninsured county residents with the exception of emergency care—and then only for those who qualify for general assistance. This means that persons living with HIV disease/AIDS, and all others who do not have health insurance, could not work if they wanted to be eligible for care at county health facilities. Instead, they would have to qualify for the ever-shrinking amount of general assistance that California's counties dole out. Even then, the only care the county would provide is emergency care. Highly successful preventative therapy such as that for pneumocystis pneumonia (PCP) would not be available to these people, with the likely result being more expensive hospitalizations and a shorter (working) life expectancy.

The Freedom to Marry Coalition

For information on how you can fight for your civil rights, and to keep from losing any more rights, call (213) 860-7350.

This coalition brings together lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and the transgendered from all walks of life and different organizations from all over the country, unified on ONE ISSUE:

☞

Same-gender marriage and A.B. 1982

☜

Please don't sit this one out!
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Help Us Cover Our Extra Postage Costs

You will notice that we applied a 55¢ postage stamp to your return envelope this month. That's because we are asking you to return six sheets of paper to us, and anything over four sheets exceeds the weight limit for a 32¢ stamp. *Thus we had to spend over $420 just on return postage this month.*

We provide return postage on your envelopes because we've found that this ensures a high response rate to our mailings. In January, over 85 percent of you responded. That's a *much* higher response rate than achieved by any other organization we know of!

The extra documents we are requesting this month are very important. We need your completed proxy in order to have a quorum at our annual meeting next month. Without a quorum, we cannot approve the budget for the next twelve months or vote on other important business. We also need your answers to the enclosed survey to help us determine what issues *you* want us to cover in future months.

In addition, we have made a commitment to become more representative of the diverse population of California. In order to measure our progress, we need to know the current makeup of our membership. The demographic questions at the end of the survey will help us to determine that.

These circumstances have increased our mailing costs substantially this month. Please consider a donation that could help us cover those extra costs.

Boyce Hinman
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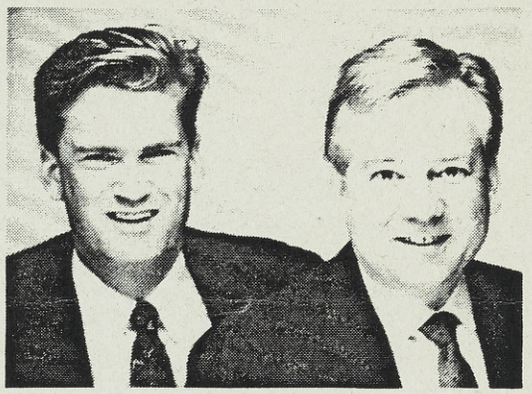

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Update on AIDS Drug Assistance Program

Last month we wrote to the Governor concerning California's AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), which has been a literal lifesaver and life-extender for many persons living with HIV disease. To bring you up to date, the State Department of Health Services (DHS) now believes that it can cover this year's fiscal shortfall and also add coverage for 3TC, which is a new FDA-approved drug. Unfortunately, DHS is holding off on coverage for the drug saquinavir, for which we also want them to pay. This means that individuals who are now using saquinavir, or may use it in the future (either by itself or in combination therapy with other drugs), won't have easy access to it. It is hoped that DHS will add saquinavir to the list of covered drugs, even if they contend that it may be a weak drug to use by itself, because it still could prove to be effective in combination therapy with other drugs. Moreover, some individuals already use saquinavir alone.

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Permanent Cuts Proposed in SSI/SSP and AFDC

In previous years Governor Wilson has severely reduced the monthly state payments to individuals on Social Security Disability Insurance and AFDC (Absent Father Dependent Children). These cuts were to be temporary and were supposedly made because of California's fiscal crises. Now Assemblymember Bordonaro (R–Paso Robles) has introduced AB 1XXXX, which the Governor can pass during a "special session" of the Legislature. (Yes, that is the bill's actual number!) This bill would make these cuts permanent. Not only can the Governor easily call a special session at any time, but budget bills in such a session require only a simple majority vote to pass, not a two-thirds vote. We are putting this item on our e-mail alert system.

Meeting Announced

Continued from page 1

service to the Project during those same months; or who made financial contributions to the Project during the 12 months prior to the meeting. Under these rules, almost anyone receiving this newsletter may vote! (Please note that even after you send us your proxy, you may still attend the meeting in person.)

New Budget to be Voted on at Meeting

The 1996–97 budget will be voted on at the annual membership meeting in April. We hope you will be there to discuss it with us. If you are not able to attend, *please sign and return the enclosed proxy.* We will be unable to approve a budget unless we have a quorum of one third of the members present in person or by proxy. The tentative budget for the new year is shown in Table 1. Please do sign and return your proxy statement so that we can approve a budget for the next fiscal year.

Table 1. Budget for FY96–97

Income	
Ad space	$2,400
Auction	$1,500
Calendars	$840
Carry forward	$1,000
Contributions	$9,276
Entertainment Books	$8,240
Total	**$23,256**
Expenses	
Bank charges	$144
Board meetings	$60
Calendars	$240
E-mail	$360
Entertainment Books	$6,521
Fees	$300
Incorporation	$10
Insurance	$1,683
Photocopies	$2,356
Postage	$5,813
Printing	$727
Sales tax	$51
Space rental	$483
Supplies	$1,868
Telephone	$269
Travel	$1,830
Total	**$22,719**

Demand Justice

Continued from page 3

at the time, seems more disingenuous in light of recent studies having to do with the incarceration rates of African Americans nationwide, and especially in California.

A study by the Sentencing Project last year in October showed that despite comparable rates of illicit drug use among young whites and blacks, federal prosecution and sentencing policies resulted in more and longer prison terms for black offenders. The Sentencing Project reported that at any given time, more than 30 percent of the nation's African American men in their 20s were in prison, on probation, or parole. Compare that figure with 6.7 percent for similarly aged European American men.

While this discrepancy is alarming, a study by the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice just released by the Los Angeles Times on February 13th offers even more perplexing figures for California. This new study reveals that 39 percent of black men in their 20s were in prison or jail or on probation during 1995, compared to 5 percent for white men in the same age group. Something other than the responsibility to stop open drug trafficking on the streets is operating here.

Attorney General Reno has replied to us that federal drug laws are being applied without bias. The evidence suggests otherwise. We must let President Clinton know that the Attorney General's explanation is unacceptable and that he must instruct her to take steps to ensure that all communities bear the burden of federal drug laws equally.

Which Issues Do You Care About Most?

Once a month our staff of analysts meets to choose topics for the letters you receive. Prior to that meeting we contact other lobbying groups such as LIFE Lobby, California NOW, and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund to obtain their input on current issues. We also read community-based newspapers and attempt to understand which issues are of the greatest concern to the majority of our members. This last element is always the hardest to gauge. We are often left unsure of exactly what issues are of most importance to *you*, the members we represent.

As we did a year ago, we are surveying you to determine the issues about which you are most concerned. Please think carefully about the list of topics in each of the four main areas we write letters about, and indicate those topics which are most important to you. Be sure to circle the appropriate numbers in each area, with 1 being the *most* important item and 8 being the *least* important item. Feel free to add your own items, and please be sure to rank them in order of importance as well.

HIV/AIDS Issues

Funding for AIDS needs (e.g., research, prevention and treatment)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Discrimination in housing and employment	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Clean needle exchange	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Continued anonymous HIV testing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Access to health care	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Access to affordable housing for PWAs	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Prevention programs focused on women and ethnic groups	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Inexpensive or "free" access to prescription drugs	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Other _____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Issues

Domestic partner registration and benefits	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Legalization of same-sex marriage	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Discrimination in housing and employment	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Violence and hate crimes	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Gays in the military	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Legal protections for transgendered persons	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Gay and lesbian supportive school and youth programs	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Other: _____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Women's Issues

Safe, legal access to affordable abortions	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Funding for women's health research (incl. breast cancer)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Improved access to health care for poor women	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Continued welfare benefits to teenage mothers	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Pay equity in the workplace	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Domestic violence	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Parental custody rights	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Other: _____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

People of Color Issues

Affirmative action	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Violence and hate crimes	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Access to quality schools	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Access to job training programs	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Color blind administration of the law	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Inner city redevelopment	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Culturally sensitive health care	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Other: _____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Demographic Information

Biological sex: Male Female Transgendered

Ethnic group origin/identification

- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Latino(a)/Hispanic
- ☐ Asian (please specify country) _____
- ☐ Pacific Islander
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

City of residence: _____

Do you have e-mail? Yes No

If yes, what is your e-mail address (to alert you when immediate input to legislators is needed):

_____

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